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[zur Startseite](#)**Petersen, Jørn Henrik and Klaus Petersen (eds.): 13 udfordringer til den danske velfærdsstat. Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag 2004, 208 p.**

In international debates on welfare state policies one can still hear experts referring to one or several Scandinavian countries as shining examples. However, the time when they served as a steady framework of reference for welfare policies and reforms in Europe is over. The Scandinavian model in its ideal-type meaning conceived in the late 1960s and 1970s is no more quoted as a solution to the social problems in different societies in the world, let alone anybody attempting to introduce it as a remedy for the social problems of the economies in transition in Europe and elsewhere. In a post-modern fashion the unanimous connotation of the Scandinavian 'model' as exemplary has disintegrated; national variants of the social and political solutions provided by the model are discussed more frequently than ever.

*13 udfordringer til den danske velfærdsstat* is a book that fits well into this understanding of the disintegrated Scandinavian welfare debate. The book is about Denmark coming to terms with the necessity of reforming the welfare provisions. Although the problems discussed in the volume, like for instance a growing number of elderly people and immigrants, egoistic attitudes, Europeanization and globalization, are often similar to the phenomena witnessed in other countries, there is hardly any reference to other debates than the Danish one. An attempt to show and praise the singularity of the Danish solutions (and current problems), with only scarce reference to the debates and problems elsewhere is palpable in almost all contributions.

One of the exceptions in this regard is Jørn Henrik Petersen's input. He demonstrates in his very succinct and well structured essay the basic differences between the ideas, values and solutions which are typical for the three ideal-type welfare regimes, the Danish, the continental and the one based on Beveridge's model. The other exception is Mehmet Ümit Necef's analysis of the Danish migration policy and its influence on the current problems with the transfer payments. In a convincing way, Necef makes a comparison with the USA and discusses a 'rational migration policy' as a possible way to diminish the Danish problems with integrating the immigrants and make them contribute to the welfare creation.

The book edited by Jørn Henrik Petersen and Klaus Petersen is the second in a series started in 2003 with *13 historier om den danske velfærdsstat*.<sup>1</sup> While the first book dealt primarily with the history of the welfare state in Denmark, this volume tries to recapitulate the current debate 2004 AD and to show the dangers and hidden traps of the unstoppable welfare provisions. It also provides a suggestion as how to cope with the current problems – for the Danish 'social engineers' to ponder upon and for the general public to understand and accept. There are still a great number of challenges for the Danish welfare state, so the title of the volume is a well chosen one. It demonstrates the belief of the authors that reforms are possible, even though they are very difficult. Challenges are not problems that cannot be solved. Challenges are there to mobilize for action

and to give incentive to changes.

In the course of reading the volume one learns that there are two categories of challenges that are decisive for the future of the Danish welfare state: the internal ones, which are structural, mental and ethical in nature, and the external ones, that are coming to Denmark with the growing influx of immigrants, increasing Europeanization and globalization. Among the contributions covering the internal challenges it is interesting to find a chapter written by Kjeld Holm, a bishop from Århus, who describes the possible links between the religiosity of the church and the civil religion epitomized by the welfare state in the nowadays secularized Danish society. This contribution is interesting, because one infrequently finds debates on similar themes in the welfare state literature. However, in this book the worldly 'belief in the welfare state', as described by Henrik Jensen, is put in a dialogue with the religious understanding of the welfare state community building, as covered by the above mentioned Kjeld Holm. There is at least one thing they have in common: the ethical challenge of the newly secularized and highly individualized community of the Danes who collectively have learnt to make use of the public welfare state provisions and almost forgot to rely on themselves in the first place.

Another input which is particularly worth to be recommended to any reader interested in answering the question about the possibility of reforming the current provision in a welfare state has been delivered by Christoffer Green-Pedersen. By providing a detailed list of the official reform packages and hidden agendas, he demonstrates links between the crisis and the reform spirit in Denmark during the last two decades. The times of relative prosperity were always very unfavourable to any welfare state reforms, regardless of the government in office. Green-Pedersen's conclusion is a requirement for the introduction of reforms: there must be either a real economic crisis, as was the case in 1982, or the Danish voters must come to believe that the crisis is approaching and that any further delay of the reforms may be fatal.

One short note on the technicalities of the academic trade. Following the style introduced in the first book in the series, the editors have asked the contributors to exclude footnotes and other paraphernalia of academic writing of their contributions. This violation of the tradition of academic book writing works in a fortunate way. Readers may have an impression of witnessing a qualified debate, easily accessible to any interested participant from the general public, and not a series of mostly well researched and academically well-founded arguments. Such a style enhances the books usability for the politicians, even at the local level, who sooner or later will have to face the challenges discussed in the book. The book is a cohesive piece of reading for any student of the Danish social solutions. The impression of a dialogue among the contributors speaks for the editors.

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1 reviewed by the same author in *NORDEUROPAforum*. 2 (2003), 90–93.